

127 Root Trail



DESIGNATION REPORT

January 20, 2021

Landmark Preservation Commission

Palm Beach, Florida

DESIGNATION REPORT

127 Root Trail

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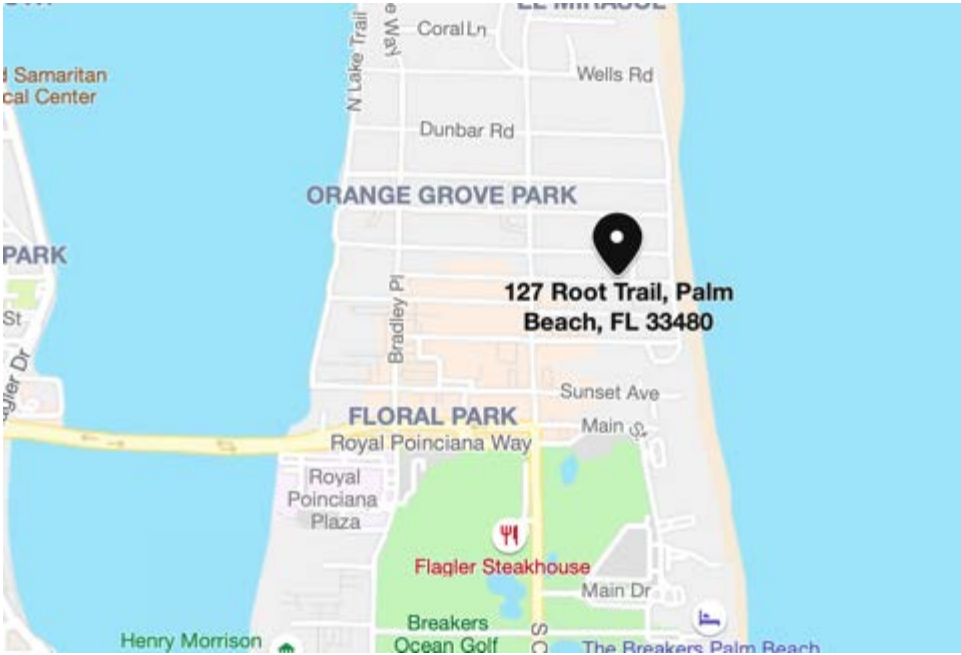
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Report produced by MurphyStillings, LLC

I. General Information

Location:	127 Root Trail Palm Beach, Florida
Date of Construction:	ca. 1905
Architect:	No Architect Listed; Likely Builder Designed & Constructed
Present Owner:	Catherine and David Brooker
Present Use:	Residential
Present Zoning:	R B
Palm Beach County Tax Folio Number:	50-43-43-14-10-003-0042
Current Legal Description:	Ocean Park H.W. Robbins Addition SLY 1.2 Feet of West 10.4 Feet Of Lot 4 & SLY 1.7 Feet of East 10 Feet of Lot 5 & Roots Subdivision PB1P22 West 12 Feet of Lot 2 & East 38 Feet of Lot 3

II. Location Map



III. Architectural Information

The house located at 127 Root Trail is a two-story Frame Vernacular dwelling built circa 1905 during the Pioneer Era in Palm Beach.¹ It is located on the north side of Root Trail between North Ocean Boulevard and North County Road. Root Trail is a narrow one-way street running west to east with beach access at the eastern terminus.

Frame Vernacular buildings represent the most typical method of construction used by South Florida's early pioneers. This form of architecture does not adhere to a particular school of design and generally utilizes locally available materials. Frame Vernacular dwellings are simple wood frame buildings which are the product of the builder's experience and response to the environment. The buildings are typically rectangular and rest on piers. Some early buildings feature vertical board and batten siding or shingles. Wood double-hung sash windows are typical and ornamentation is sparse, including wood shingles, overhanging eaves, rafter tails, corner boards, porch columns and vents in the gable ends.

127 Root Trail is a two-bay wide, L-shaped frame dwelling covered with coursed wood shingles and resting on masonry piers. The first story front façade of the main block features the front entry offset to the west and a two-over-two double-hung sash window east of this entry. All windows in the dwelling, except for the stained-glass window, are currently two-over-two double-hung sash. A three-rise



¹ Palm Beach Post Then and Now: Palm Beach Panorama. Palm Beach Post, March 24, 1996. This article includes a 1905 photo where this house is likely shown in the background

brick staircase leads to the front entry featuring a wood-paneled door. The second story front facade has a pair of windows centered on the façade and above these windows is a small rectangular stained-glass window in the gabled end. The south facing wing of the dwelling features a secondary entry door and single windows on the first and second story.

The east and west façades include four windows symmetrically placed on the first and second stories. The rear, or north façade, features one window on both the first and second stories, a rear entry door, a small porch, a vent in the gable end and a flat roof extension with an overhanging eave and rafter tails. Additional ornamentation consists of simple wood window surrounds, corner boards and a wood cornice over the front entry. The intersecting gable roofs are covered with composition shingles.

127 Root Trail has not had any significant additions or alterations in its approximate 115 year history, although there is speculation that there may have originally been a front porch.² There have been repairs to the dwelling and the roofing material was replaced at least once, but the dwelling is mostly in its original condition.

IV. Historical Information

The houses on Root Trail are distinctive in Palm Beach as they are the oldest remaining collection of dwellings from the Pioneer Era. Root Trail is a narrow block-long street with mostly small frame vernacular cottages built side by side on small lots often very close to the street. It is a unique enclave historically known for its resident artists.

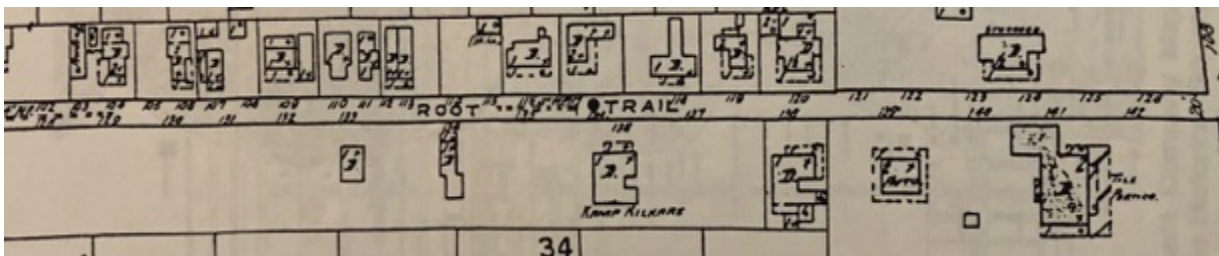
127 Root Trail was built circa 1905.³ The date is presumed from a 1905 photograph of Root Trail where this house appears to exist east of the women and dwelling in the forefront. The house may actually have an earlier date or later date, but it was built prior to 1919 as it is shown on the 1919 Sanborn Insurance Map. House names were very popular in Palm Beach in the early years and City Directory research suggests that 127 Root Trail was named De La Mar.

² Ibid

³ Ibid



Root's Subdivision, which originally consisted of 18 lots on the north side of Root Trail, is one of the oldest subdivisions in Palm Beach. The first recorded transaction in Root's Subdivision took place in 1903 when Palm Beach was still part of Dade County and eight years prior to the Town of Palm Beach being incorporated. Root's Subdivision and Root Trail were both named for Enoch Root, an early Pioneer of Palm Beach.⁴ Enoch Root was an artist and many of the houses on Root Trail were historically owned or rented by artists. The houses are unpretentious and have Pioneer Era Florida charm not found in other areas of Palm Beach.



1919 Sanborn Insurance Map

⁴ Records of the Clerk of the County Court indicate Enoch Root was involved in the initial transactions on Root Trail and The Lake Worth Pioneer Association Records indicate Root Trail was named after Enoch Root. A May 2, 1988, Palm Beach Post Newspaper Article, "Root Trail: A Neighborhood Unto Itself," quotes a resident stating that Root Trail was named after Root's Pineapple Farm., however there is no evidence supporting this claim.



Historical Photograph of Root Trail by E.W. Hazard – Circa 1905
Palm Beach Panorama, published by the Henry Morrison Flagler Museum

It is not clear when the configuration of the Root Subdivision Lots 2 and 3 changed but when the O’Sullivan’s purchased the property from Alice Carr in the 1930s the lot description was Roots Subdivision West 12 feet of Lot 2 and East 38 feet of Lot 3.⁵ Annie C. O’Sullivan, who also owned the property next door at 135 Root Trail, lived on Root Trail from the 1930s until her death in 1973. Annie O’Sullivan moved to Palm Beach in 1919 and was one of the earliest members of the Palm Beach Chamber of Commerce. She served on the alter guild of Bethesda-by-the-Sea Episcopal Church, was president of the Palm Beach High School PTA and was a member of the Daughters of the Confederacy and Daughters of the American Revolution. Werner Nordhoff purchased the house from the O’Sullivan’s in 1974 before selling it to Tod Draz in 1978. Tod Draz was a famous fashion illustrator who restored and decorated 127 Root Trail as well as 131 and 133 Root Trail which were smaller buildings on the property. At this time the houses were known as the Three Bears with 127 Root Trail known as Papa Bear.⁶

127 Root Trail was purchased in 2020 by the current owners, Catherine and David Brooker. The Brookers are planning additions and alterations to the dwelling that include adding front and back porches, a two-story, two-bay wide front gabled wing closely matching the current main block of the dwelling. This addition will change the house from an L-shape to a U-shape. The windows, doors, foundation, roof and mechanical systems will all be updated to meet current building code standards.

⁵ The current property description is Ocean Park H.W. Robbins Addition SLY 1.2 Feet of West 10.4 Feet Of Lot 4 & SLY 1.7 Feet of East 10 Feet of Lot 5 & Roots Subdivision PB1P22 West 12 Feet of Lot 2 & East 38 Feet of Lot 3; This adds a small 1.2 feet of Lot 4 and 1.7 feet of Lot 5 in the rear that is located in the Ocean Park H.W. Robbins Addition.

⁶ The small house west of 127 Root Trail was Mama Bear and the house in the rear was Baby Bear. Both houses have since been demolished.

Enoch Root

Born in Canaan, Connecticut, Enoch Root moved to Moline, Illinois, at the age of fourteen. Five years later he traveled to Europe to spend two years studying art. Upon returning to America he spent two years with his brothers as a gold miner in Colorado. In 1862, Root enlisted in the Third Colorado Infantry and was promoted to Captain of Company H, 68th Regiment, U.S. Infantry. He stayed active in service until the end of the Civil War.

In 1867, Root enrolled in the Chicago Academy of Design, became a student of Conrad Dehi, for a year and then went back to Europe for more study and travel. He returned to America in 1873 and that August married Victoria Adelaide Ward in Providence, Rhode Island. They settled in Chicago and Root started an art school in the Art Institute Building. He closed the school when the Academy of Design reopened, and Root became affiliated with the academy, serving in several capacities, including Secretary and President.

Enoch and Victoria wintered in Palm Beach starting in 1889 and in 1892 they purchased a tract of land extending from the lake to the ocean along the present day Oleander Way and Root Trail. They built a house for themselves and this became their permanent home, residing there except for short summer visits to Chicago and Connecticut.⁷ Later they built cottages for artists on their property and laid out Root Trail.⁸

Enoch Root did not appear to exhibit professionally in Palm Beach, however he was an early and possibly founding member of the Palm Beach County Art Club. In 1911, Enoch was elected to the first Palm Beach Town Council. Enoch was a founding member of the Lake Worth Pioneer Association, open to those who settled in Palm Beach prior to 1893. He was also an active member of the Palm Beach Property Owner's Association, the Masons and the Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.). Enoch also served as a Palm Beach Postmaster and Justice of the Peace in the early 1900s. Victoria was a member of the Guild of Bethesda-by-the-Sea Episcopal Church, a group of notable Society women integral in fund-raising for the church.

⁷ It is not clear whether their house was on the ocean or the lake side of their property. The William Gray Warden Residence National Register Nomination states that the site of the current Warden house formerly contained one of the first houses in Palm Beach which was owned by the late Enoch Root. The 1919 Sanborn Map shows a larger frame house with some smaller frame buildings on the site of the Warden house, which is at the eastern end of Root Trail fronting the ocean.

⁸ Francis Gilmore, "History of Palm Beach County Art Club One of Fascinating Chapters in the Annals of the City," Palm Beach Times 17 February 1924.

Victoria Root passed away July 27, 1914. Shortly after Enoch suffered a stroke and was cared for by his sister-in-law, Mary E.L. Root, who had previously moved to Palm Beach. Enoch died on June 27, 1915 and both he and Victoria are buried in Woodlawn Cemetery in West Palm Beach. Part of the Root's property was sold to artist Daisy Erb, who created an artist's colony.⁹

V. Architects Biography

No Architect is listed for 127 Root Trail. This frame vernacular building was likely designed and constructed by a local builder.

VI. Statement of Significance

The house at 127 Root Trail is significant as a very good example of a Pioneer Era Frame Vernacular dwelling located on a street renowned for its early 1900's buildings. While its style is widespread in South Florida, its scarcity in the Town of Palm Beach and its location on Root Trail in the early Root's Subdivision increases the properties significance as an historic resource.

VII. Criteria For Designation

Section 16-38A of the Town of Palm Beach Landmark's Preservation Ordinance #2-84 outlines the criteria for designation of a landmark or landmark site and suggests that at least one criterion must be met to justify the designation. Listed below are criteria which relate to this property and justification for designation:

(1) "Exemplifies or reflects the broad cultural, political, economic or social history of the nation, state, county or town."

127 Root Trail is an important dwelling on Root Trail, a street of mostly early Frame Vernacular houses. The lots it sits on were part of the early Root's Subdivision named for early, civically active artist pioneers of Palm Beach, Enoch and Victoria Root. The unique character of the dwelling exemplifies the early history of the Town of Palm Beach and the Pioneer Era of the architecture. Annie O'Sullivan, an early and active resident of Palm Beach, owned the house for forty years and Tod Draz, a famous fashion illustrator,

⁹ Palm Beach Post, 7 January 1921.

restored and decorated the house in the 1980s when Root Trail was again an enclave for artists.

(3) “Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or is a specimen inherently valuable for the study of a period, style, method of construction or use of indigenous materials or craftsmen.”

127 Root Trail is a very good example of the Frame Vernacular style of architecture that is representative of the development in South Florida from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. Frame vernacular architecture does not adhere to academic guidelines and is noted for its simplicity and modest origins. The dwelling’s wood double-hung sash windows, coursed wood shingles, rafter tails, corner boards, gabled roofs and masonry piers are all noteworthy features of Frame Vernacular houses.

While the Frame Vernacular style of construction is perhaps one of the most prominent residential design styles in early South Florida, its scarcity in the Town of Palm Beach makes the existence of 127 Root Trail very significant. The high level of the integrity of the dwelling along with its unique location on Root Trail sets it apart from a Town known for opulence and grandeur.¹⁰

¹⁰ Jane Day, 145 Root Trail Landmark Designation Report, 20 November 1996.

VIII. Selected Bibliography

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IX. Florida Master Site File Form

Page 1

☐ Original
☒ Update



HISTORICAL STRUCTURE FORM FLORIDA MASTER SITE FILE Version 5.0 3/19

Shaded Fields represent the minimum acceptable level of documentation.
Consult the Guide to Historical Structure Forms for detailed instructions.

Site#8 **PB06657**
Field Date 12-6-2019
Form Date 9-4-2020
Recorder # MAP

Site Name(s) (address if none) 127 Root Trail Multiple Listing (DHR only) _____
Survey Project Name Palm Beach Historical Site Survey Survey # (DHR only) _____
National Register Category (please check one) ☒ building ☐ structure ☐ district ☐ site ☐ object
Ownership: ☐ private-profit ☐ private-nonprofit ☒ private-individual ☐ private-nonspecific ☐ city ☐ county ☐ state ☐ federal ☐ Native American ☐ foreign ☐ unknown

LOCATION & MAPPING

Street Number 127 Direction _____ Street Name Root Street Type Trail Suffix Direction _____
Address: 127 Root Trail
Cross Streets (nearest / between) _____
USGS 7.5 Map Name PALM BEACH USGS Date 1986 Plat or Other Map _____
City / Town (within 3 miles) Palm Beach In City Limits? ☒ yes ☐ no ☐ unknown County Palm Beach
Township 43S Range 43E Section 14 1/4 section: ☐ NW ☐ SW ☐ SE ☐ NE Irregular-name: _____
Tax Parcel # 50434314100030042 Landgrant _____
Subdivision Name _____ Block 003 Lot 0042
UTM Coordinates: Zone ☐ 16 ☐ 17 Easting Northing
Other Coordinates: X: _____ Y: _____ Coordinate System & Datum _____
Name of Public Tract (e.g., park) _____

HISTORY

Construction Year: 1900 ☐ approximately ☒ year listed or earlier ☐ year listed or later
Original Use Private Residence (House/Cottage/Ca From (year): 1900 To (year): 2020
Current Use Private Residence (House/Cottage/Ca From (year): 1900 To (year): 2020
Other Use _____ From (year): _____ To (year): _____
Moves: ☐ yes ☒ no ☐ unknown Date: _____ Original address _____
Alterations: ☐ yes ☐ no ☒ unknown Date: _____ Nature _____
Additions: ☐ yes ☐ no ☒ unknown Date: _____ Nature _____
Architect (last name first): _____ Builder (last name first): _____
Ownership History (especially original owner, dates, profession, etc.)
WHITE MICHELE C
Is the Resource Affected by a Local Preservation Ordinance? ☐ yes ☒ no ☐ unknown Describe _____

DESCRIPTION

Style Frame Vernacular Exterior Plan Rectangular Number of Stories 2
Exterior Fabric(s) 1. Shingles-wood 2. _____ 3. _____
Roof Type(s) 1. Gable 2. _____ 3. _____
Roof Material(s) 1. Asphalt shingles 2. _____ 3. _____
Roof secondary strucs. (dormers etc.) 1. _____ 2. _____
Windows (types, materials, etc.)
single & paired 2/2 wood sash windows, decorative single pane awning
Distinguishing Architectural Features (exterior or interior ornaments)
steep and narrow structure, wood shingle exterior, steep pitch front facing gable roof, central entry
Ancillary Features / Outbuildings (record outbuildings, major landscape features; use continuation sheet if needed.)
mature vegetation, single drive

DHR USE ONLY

OFFICIAL EVALUATION

DHR USE ONLY

NR List Date <input type="checkbox"/> Owner Objection	SHPO - Appears to meet criteria for NR listing: <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> insufficient info Date _____ Init. _____ KEEPER - Determined eligible: <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no Date _____ NR Criteria for Evaluation: <input type="checkbox"/> a <input type="checkbox"/> b <input type="checkbox"/> c <input type="checkbox"/> d (see National Register Bulletin 15, p. 2)
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DESCRIPTION (continued)

Chimney: No. 0 Chimney Material(s): 1. _____ 2. _____
 Structural System(s): 1. Wood frame 2. _____ 3. _____
 Foundation Type(s): 1. Piers 2. _____
 Foundation Material(s): 1. Obscured 2. _____
 Main Entrance (stylistic details)

centrally located multi panel entry behind screen door

Porch Descriptions (types, locations, roof types, etc.)

no porch, masonry steps and landing

Condition (overall resource condition): ☐ excellent ☒ good ☐ fair ☐ deteriorated ☐ ruinous

Narrative Description of Resource

This 1900 Frame Vernacular style building is in good condition. Three buildings are located on this parcel, including PB06659 and an unseen building.

Archaeological Remains _____ ☐ Check if Archaeological Form Completed

RESEARCH METHODS (select all that apply)

☒ FMSF record search (sites/surveys) ☐ library research ☐ building permits ☒ Sanborn maps
☐ FL State Archives/photo collection ☐ city directory ☐ occupant/owner interview ☒ plat maps
☒ property appraiser / tax records ☐ newspaper files ☐ neighbor interview ☐ Public Lands Survey (DEP)
☒ cultural resource survey (CRAS) ☐ historic photos ☐ interior inspection ☐ HABS/HAER record search
☒ other methods (describe) Town Staff

Bibliographic References (give FMSF manuscript # if relevant, use continuation sheet if needed)

OPINION OF RESOURCE SIGNIFICANCE

Appears to meet the criteria for National Register listing individually? ☐ yes ☐ no ☒ insufficient information

Appears to meet the criteria for National Register listing as part of a district? ☒ yes ☐ no ☐ insufficient information

Explanation of Evaluation (required, whether significant or not; use separate sheet if needed)

This building may meet criteria for individual listing, but more research regarding any alterations would be needed to determine individual eligibility. It meets district criteria based on its architectural features and association within the Town.

Area(s) of Historical Significance (see National Register Bulletin 15, p. 8 for categories: e.g. "architecture", "ethnic heritage", "community planning & development", etc.)

1. Community planning & developm 3. _____ 5. _____
 2. Architecture 4. _____ 6. _____

DOCUMENTATION

Accessible Documentation Not Filed with the Site File - including field notes, analysis notes, photos, plans and other important documents

1) Document type _____ Maintaining organization _____
 Document description _____ File or accession #'s _____
 2) Document type _____ Maintaining organization _____
 Document description _____ File or accession #'s _____

RECORDER INFORMATION

Recorder Name Patricia Davenport-Jacobs Affiliation Environmental Services, Inc.
 Recorder Contact Information 7220 Financial Way, Suite 100, Jacksonville, FL 32256/9044702200/pdavenport
 (address / phone / fax / e-mail)

Required Attachments

① USGS 7.5' MAP WITH STRUCTURE LOCATION CLEARLY INDICATED

② LARGE SCALE STREET, PLAT OR PARCEL MAP (available from most property appraiser web sites)

③ PHOTO OF MAIN FACADE, DIGITAL IMAGE FILE

When submitting an image, it must be included in digital AND hard copy format (plain paper grayscale acceptable). Digital image must be at least 1600 x 1200 pixels, 24-bit color, jpeg or tiff.